

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

On Monday evening, February 5th, 1872, Dr. J. Baxter Langley delivered his annual address on the "Political Situation." The meeting was held in the Lecture Hall, Royal Hill, Greenwich, W. Price, Esq., of Deptford, occupying the chair. There was a large number of Dr. Langley's supporters on the platform.

The chairman opened the proceedings in some remarks in support of the movement for a free and unsectarian education, and then, amid cheers, called on Dr. Langley to give his address.

Dr. Langley, who was very warmly received on rising, said that for eight successive years, about the period they were then in, he had addressed them on "The Political Situation," and during that time, he might say, he had earned the right to state that the lectures delivered by him in that hall had been the means of raising the tone of the borough, and giving it a history in politics, which otherwise it would not have had. (Cheers.)

IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL TEACHING.

He had often been surprised when the fact had struck him, that while many men assumed without reproach to be the ministers of the gospel and ex-pounders of the will of God as revealed therein, they regarded it as a piece of assumption when a man like him dared to call himself a teacher of politics and an expositor of the political rights of the people. For his own part, to be the last was his ambition, and let him here say, that if necessary he would rather be the political lecturer and teacher

than sit as their silent representative in the House of Commons. The one occupation would certainly be a high privilege to any one enjoying it, for it could not be assumed by men who had not the mental ability wherewith to perform the duties of such an office; whether he would assume the other position as a reward for his efforts in the first, it would be for them to say. ("You will," and cheers.) The study of politics appeared to be the next best thing to the study of religion. (Hear.) Whatever might be said with regard to the last, the study of politics concerned what we have to do here; it was the science of the procuration of the happiness of the greater number; it was the science of those who sought to work so as to leave the world better than they found it, and the man who thought out the best means of doing this was best entitled to rank after the minister of religion. (Cheers.) Looking each at the political past of the year, they were like gazers into a kaleidoscope; there had been changes, and changes were proceeding as they looked. Some of these showed them themselves and others sometimes in a ridiculous appearance, sometimes in a light that proved a certain amount of progress achieved, and at others revealing dark spots where there were yet rights to be recognised, and which they would endeavour to sum up and recognise there that night. (Cheers.)

Let them look for a moment at some local affairs. (Hear.)

GREENWICH HOSPITAL.

They had had a spurt of enthusiasm, which had risen suddenly and as suddenly subsided, about Greenwich Hospital. (Hear.) He would have had this a more permanent agitation, and would have wished the committee had pursued a more active course after the meeting it held than it had done. (Hear.) For his part, he was not satisfied that the

matter had ended with a mere promise. (Hear.) They should have recorded, as a committee, what was most useful and desirable from their point of view, leaving the Government, without dictating to it, to apply the remedy, while they on their side insisted on action, without pressing their plans on the Government. (Hear.)

LOCAL CONSERVATIVE EFFORTS.

There had been some curious political combinations during the year : a certain class gathered, and particularly in that room, in a sort of conspiracy of the Guy Fawkes character, to blow up the Liberal party in the borough. (Laughter.) They all knew how the Pook-Orchard conspiracy ended. It was a combination of a few dozen of intending bludgeon-men with some bad-intentioned political prostitutes—men prepared to sell their ability to anybody who would buy it for a small item, and who did their work so badly that their own friends became ashamed of them. (Hear, hear.) He thought, as far as they were concerned, that the Radical party, who alone stood forward to defend Mr. Gladstone on that occasion, had reason to congratulate themselves that the conspiracy was so destitute of every characteristic which could confer dignity on, or raise a political party, that it did more good to the Liberal cause than it did harm. (Hear.)

SUPPRESSION OF SPEECH.

He had noticed that this spirit of "bludgeon" worship that had distinguished the Greenwich Tory conspiracy, was extending itself in a similar way in the acts of Conservatives in other boroughs. At Leeds, Bolton, and other places in the country, and even in the southern suburbs of London, they had had a specimen of it. (Hear.) At Bolton the riotous desire to chain public opinion, and to stop public speaking on any side but their own, had resulted in the death of a man, and he did not hesitate to say that the Conservative body were guilty of

“wilful murder” in that act. (Loud cheers.) Had they ever done anything to deserve this? No, for when, on a certain occasion, a man came into that district to teach doctrines of an antagonistic and irritating character, and there was an attempt to suppress liberty of speech by some who would not hear him, he (Dr. Langley), although he condemned his mode of procedure, went and stood beside him and demanded from the people of Greenwich that he should be heard. (Hear.) They as Advanced Liberals believed in justice in this matter of free speech, for Tory as for Liberal, and he had always heard that it was the first condition of the growth of their liberties that they should possess, and value at its true worth, that tolerance for the expression of the opinions of others which they claimed for the utterance of their own views. (Hear.) No man was capable of understanding the true dignity of the politician unless he was able to exercise self-control while listening to the arguments of others, and could wait for an opportunity to reply, confident that his was the truth. (Hear.) He believed that the combination of local Tories with foreign roughs chiefly led at last to the protest of the Liberal party to the continued absence of Mr. Gladstone from his constituents, and which literally forced that gentleman to appear before them on Blackheath. The enthusiasm with which he was welcomed was shared in by the whole party of progress, who received him with so much ardour. (“We will again, too.”) They would be very happy to do so. (“They will,” and laughter.) What he wished to say was, that this enthusiasm arose from the fact that Mr. Gladstone had been so beset and misrepresented and treated in so cowardly a manner by his enemies, that when he did come his friends in Greenwich welcomed him in the manner described, and not only that, but received his speech without an attempt to criticise it too closely. (Hear.) He (Dr. Langley) had tried to make that welcome as large

and generous as he could make it, and no one rejoiced more at the fact that it was so generous and enthusiastic. (Hear.) But when the time of their meeting with him had passed away, and they had got out of the blaze of enthusiasm, what did they find Mr. Gladstone's speech amount to? They would find it consisted of a local apology on the one hand, and sounded a defiance to the charges brought against the Government by the Liberal party on the other. (Cheers.) As a party speech it was an apology because it vindicated certain parts of the Government procedure, and took credit for what the Government did itself, which was the introduction of the Land Bill, the Ballot, and Education. But we had all a right to expect these from the Government, and more, that they would adhere to the principles at the bottom of these measures, and not coquette with the opposition to carry measures offensive to the Liberal party. (Cheers.) The peroration with which Mr. Gladstone concluded his speech was unquestionably a magnificent piece of eloquence, but it proved too much. It said, "You must save yourselves—(hear)—we, the Government party, can do little for you; you must not expect much, you must rely upon yourselves." (Hear.)

SELF RELIANCE.

Self reliance was a just quality, but when it was made the excuse for inactivity of the Government which preached it, an excuse for a Government for doing what it should not have done, it was quoted for a wrong purpose, and improperly applied. (Hear.) If they would remember—the elder politicians in that room could do so—they who remembered the passing of the Reform Bill, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and other measures of the past—the Government of the times when those events occurred had always said something like that said by Mr. Gladstone. They said, practically, what Lord John Russell said—"Now you have Reform, now you have the Corn Laws, what do you Radicals want;

why don't you 'rest and be thankful?' " Why progress could not rest, it continued to march on, even with a better future before it for mankind. (Cheers.) That which was the eternal desire for improvement in the mind of man and hope in a better time to come was when applied to politics, a want that could not be satisfied unless it could count daily and hourly on a faith in the world's better future. (Cheers.) But look at what the Government promised, and then read the speech of Mr. Gladstone, the Government promised too much and performed too little. (Hear.) He did not want to be misunderstood; he desired to say that these words of friendly criticism were not intended by any means to be as a sort of satisfaction to the Conservatives.

POLITICAL ATHEISM.

He looked upon Conservatism as the atheism of politics. It was practically the atheism of politics because it banished hope and seized the stagnant state of things of the past as that in which they were to live for ever. (Hear.) While glancing at what the Government had done in the past, he desired to be considered as discussing their procedure as a friend, hoping for the correction of mistakes, and with the intention of pointing out how they might be avoided in the future, and how the Government would fail to obtain the support of the political party which sent them into power if they repeated those mistakes. (Hear.)

THE FOREIGN POLICY.

Of the foreign policy of the Government he highly approved, it was beyond all praise—(cheers)—dignified and worthy of the noble history of English politics—(renewed cheers)—and in harmony with the past historical features of the English character. (Loud cheers.) He might point to the negotiations with Russia—(hear)—to those arising out of the German war with France, and those, especially which dealt with the Alabama Question—(cheers)—and which made reason and deliberation, the

arbitrament in the differences which had arisen, rather than the sword. (Hear.) As soon as these last negotiations had proceeded to a settlement there had arisen a desire to misrepresent the real issue before us. The *Telegraph*, *Daily News*, and some other papers had put the American "case" forward as too binding, containing too many items of demands, and as one which it was impossible to refer to arbitration. But would they ever dare to say we should go to war? ("No, no.") What did they mean? Whatever the claims were, they were as a drop in the ocean to the loss which a war would incur. If the brotherhood in which England and America existed had to be torn apart, what would ever pay for the treasure which would be lost, or the blood which would redden that ocean which divided us? (Cheers.) He apprehended that the lawyers on the American side put their case first before the court as it was, just as lawyers put their cases before the courts at Westminster, where they sometimes laid their damages at £2000, and obtained £50 for their trouble. (Laughter.) But even with regard to these points they must notice that the Government gave way to panic, where during the French and German war, they increased the army in a feeble way, and that at a time when the two greatest nations in Europe were at war with each other, and England might at all times have considered herself safe. (Hear.)

THE ALABAMA CLAIMS.

With regard to the Alabama Question, there was one thing to be noticed, namely, the disposition of the Government to conciliate the opposition by taking its nominees from that side of the House. They thought to strengthen their position when they took Sir Stafford Northcote to represent them, but instead of this, they had offered a cowardly insult to the Americans, by sending them a man from that very

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party which had always abused America, and tried to get that country and England at loggerheads with each other. (Hear.)

THE ADVANCED LIBERALS.

Since these transactions, there had grown up a great amount of dissatisfaction amongst the Advanced Liberal party. The Nonconformists had "revolted." (Loud cheers.) They had declared that their allegiance to the Liberal party must cease unless they were prepared to recognise the true principles of Religious Liberty and Equality. (Renewed cheers.)

DISSATISFACTION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

A large proportion of working men had become dissatisfied because no notice was taken of their just complaints, with regard to the enclosure of the commons, and of other matters relating to them. The House of Commons had sat up night after night to pass the Enclosure Bill, in which there was a clause which was complained of. The working men had also a right to complain, when they felt the position they were in after their failure to pass the Mines Regulation Bill, and there was good cause for the statement of one of their representatives, when he said the House of Commons was too much engaged in passing party measures to think of the sanctity of the lives of working men. (Hear.) During the last session they had had great dissatisfaction, the causes of which he would trace, and leave them to judge whether these causes were well founded or not, and whether the policy of the Liberal party would not be best served by saying what that party demanded, and then let the Government take its own course, leaving it to get rid of those in the cabinet who were a drag on it, and to make itself what it should be—a truly Liberal Government. (Cheers.)

MR. BRUCE AND MR. LOWE.

No Government which ever claimed the popular sympathy was ever so unfortunate as to have in it a man so entirely politically stupid as was Mr. Bruce. (Laughter and hear.) He stood in a position in which there lay in his hands the destinies of many important interests, and no one had ever so failed in that position. He had played with the cabmen (for it could not be called "legislation") and "cabby" had beaten him at his own game; he had tried to meddle with the licensed victuallers, and they simply set him at defiance; he was continually misunderstanding the deep and generous feelings of the people of the country with regard to the Contagious Diseases Acts, and he was blind and deaf to the danger to the community in connection with that question. (Hear.) And if they looked for a man more unfitted to be put into a Liberal Government than any other, Robert Lowe was that man. (Hear.) A man who, a few years ago, was the most venomous of the parties opposing the enfranchisement of the people, who had declared that as a class they were "venal, ignorant, and corrupt." (Hear.) There was also Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen, the second of Mr. Bruce, just as stupid as his superior officer. Mr. Bruce always reminded him of a comic picture in a play he had seen where a Whig of the old school when asked a number of questions on some subject, used always to say, "That question has been the study of my life, and when it comes before the House I shall give it my most mature consideration, and then—I shall vote for the Government." (Laughter.) No matter how important the question on which one approached Mr. Bruce, that is something like all that is to be got from him. Everything he had touched had been a failure, and he himself was a most distressing failure. (Hear.)

THE ADMIRALTY.

There was no department in which they had such gross failures as in the Admiralty—(hear)—and

failures which cost a large number of valuable lives. He gave Mr. Childers and Mr. Baxter every credit for the very best intentions, but what he would add was this, they had a large number of men in office, supported by those who belonged to the old officialism, who, bad in temper and bad in their support, took upon themselves courses of their own, and defied the intentions of those who were their superiors and who were pressing for reforms which the Liberal party desired. These would have to be replaced by those who would know their proper positions, as servants and not dictators in the offices of Government. (Hear.) The Liberal party had also a right to claim from a Government which held itself to be pure, that it should be above the distribution of medals, ribbons, and "K.C.B's" to its followers. He did not say that this was corruption, but the Government that did it laid itself open to suspicion, and he said, that, like Cæsar's wife, a Liberal Government should be "above" suspicion. (Hear.)

RELIGIOUS EQUALITY.

Putting aside some of the larger measures, he might point to the abolition of University Tests, and the defeat of the Liberal party on the question of church scholarships by the Government as an instance of its departure from the principles upon which it was elected; while, quite inconsistently with this, they took quite an opposite course in regard to tests in Ireland. They did worse, they supported the proposition that only churchmen should be the governors of endowed schools. Again having to speak of Mr. Lowe, Dr. Langley denounced the right hon. gentleman as the most remarkable example living of political tergiversation, and after condemning his Match Tax proposal, which resulted, he said, in the bludgeoning of a harmless crowd of women and children, while he (Mr. Lowe) crept into the House of Commons by

the underground railway,—referred to the causes of dissatisfaction against the Government possessed by the Liberal party, and then ridiculed the assertion of the Government that there were no grounds for dissatisfaction. The only way to bring the Government to their senses was to let them know in the most unmistakable way the feelings of the people. (Cheers.)

THE BALLOT BILL.

He condemned the Ballot Bill as an imperfect measure which should never have been sent to the House of Lords without the two provisions as to the extension of the hours of polling and the payment of the expenses of elections out of the rates. (Cheers.) But Mr. Bruce, when seen by a deputation, he (Dr. Langley) attended to press forward the Bill, expressed the most confident assurance that the Bill would pass, that the Government had a majority, that it would be pressed on at once, and that no one could resist its passing. It was alone enough to create dissatisfaction when the Government were seen to use their power to defeat one of these clauses, while they courted the opposition and defeat of the other. (Hear.)

THE NONCONFORMIST REVOLT.

But the event of the year, and which now stopped the way was what he had termed before, and properly so, the “revolt” of the nonconformists. The Education Bill was passed to suit the want of the people as to educational enfranchisement; but it was intended, and purposely so by its framers, to hand over to the church the new endowments, for the purpose of teaching the children in the doctrines of one church. The nonconformists had set forward their doctrines in such a distinct way that he proposed to read them, as found in Mr. Dixon’s motion: “That in the opinion of this House the provisions of the Elementary Education are defective, and its

working unsatisfactory, inasmuch as, 1st—It fails to secure the general election of School Boards in town and rural districts; 2nd—It does not render obligatory the attendance of children at school; 3rd—It deals in a partial and irregular manner with the remission and payment of school fees by School Boards; 4th—It allows School Boards to pay fees out of the rates levied upon the community to denominational schools over which the ratepayers have no control; 5th—It permits School Boards to use the money of the ratepayers for the purpose of imparting dogmatic religious instruction in schools established by local School Boards; 6th—By the concession of these permissive powers it provokes religious discord throughout the country, and by the exercise of them it violated the rights of conscience.” (Cheers.) That appeared to him a fair and temperate statement of those who wished to see the people have a free secular education; who did not want to start a fresh agitation; but who, if an election takes place, would cause the Government to find itself in a minority. (Hear.) He would deal with the question by devoting five days of the week to secular knowledge, and two to the religious instruction of the sects. After an argument, showing that secular instruction was not antagonistic to the attainment of religious knowledge, and that the question must necessarily end by the Board Schools becoming strictly secular, the speaker said he would not further dwell on it, as it had been spoken of by the chairman; but, he asked, supposing on the Scotch Education Bill next session, the Advanced Liberals and the nonconformist Liberal party should demand that the Bill should be constructed on the platform of the League—that the state money should no longer be paid for denominational teaching; and supposing the Government resisted that proposition, and the Government party went with them as against their more-advanced friends, what would be the position of things? There might be such a com-

bination—Church Liberals, with the Irish Catholics and Conservatives on one side, and on the other the whole body of true Liberals—that the Government (whether they would be defeated or not could not be known) would be compelled to re-consider their policy. (Hear.) It was the duty of the people to prepare for the crisis which was impending, and which would result in a struggle for the freedom of the human mind. He besought them not to consider men, but principles; for there might be a general re-arrangement of parties, and they might find themselves in a most unexpected position if an election came. (Hear.) They must see their way clearly at this important time, and give no false note of alarm; for it was a question to go to the heart of every man who desired to see men as free as himself. It called on the religious man to say, “we admire and adhere to our religion, but the question of the hour is one of liberty or no liberty for conscience and mind, and we will throw aside our differences and unite in the broad principles of light and truth. (Cheers.) No compromise would be possible, and if the Government were beaten they would lose honour as well as place, being defeated by their own principles; if the Liberty party were defeated they would have lost a temporary triumph, but not their honour. (Cheers.) To show how the arguments of the nonconformists were met, Dr. Langleigh dealt at some length with an article of the *Telegraph*, a paper which he termed the favourite of “fops, flunkies, and fast men,” and its policy as “sensational, servile, and sycophantic.” (Laughter.) In this article, published on the day it reported Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen’s speech at Sandwich, the *Telegraph*, after putting its case in a form which was fully met by the programme of the League, proceeded to ask “what historical or rational or popular right have the Dissenters to dictate the policy of the English people?” What right? Because they were large sections of the English people;

because they represented the majority of the English people; because they were men, independant, and regarding their principles as more important than the fate of a political party; and because they were not the servile flunkies of whig officialism. (Cheers.)

MR. JOHN BRIGHT.

After dealing with Mr. Hugessen at Sandwich, he proceeded to pass in review other questions of public importance, and involving difficulties for the Government. He regretted that John Bright was not in his place, because his calm wisdom and consideration would have guided the Government to different conclusions. (Cheers.)

INFRINGEMENT OF RIGHT.

Dr. Langley condemned the opening of telegraphic messages by Mr. Scudamore as an invasion of the public right, and second only in turpitude to the act of Sir P. Graham, when he violated the privacy of Mazzini's letters. (Cheers.) He denounced the conduct of the Government in violating the right of the people to meet in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, where great brutalities were committed by the police on the people, who had (in London) already settled the question of the right of the people to the parks, and would again when necessary. (Cheers.) He condemned the attempts being made to suppress public opinion, by forcing working men to take to the open air for meeting places, and to protest against which injustice a meeting was being then held in Trafalgar Square. Cheers.)

THE NINE HOURS' MOVEMENT.

He hailed as a cheering sign of the times, that the movement for the shortening of the hours of labour (taking place at a time when labour was in demand greater than for ten years past) had succeeded, but censured the spirit in which their demands had been made by some of the men, whose object should be, not the increase of price for overtime, but leisure,

that they might educate and raise themselves intellectually and domestically, and leave room in the factories for the thousands who were still unemployed. (Cheers.)

THE PRINCE OF WALES.

He was glad of the recovery of the Prince of Wales—(hisses and cheers)—because he did not think they were quite prepared to deal with the question which would have arisen had he died, and because had he died and they had raised the question, they would have been met with the charge that they were fighting against a defenceless woman and children, whereas, now, they could deal with a mature man. (Cheers.) He was also glad, and he did not intend it disrespectfully, that the Prince had been ill, because the illness of the Prince had been the means of calling attention to the laws of nature, the violation of which brought disease and death home to the hearths and homes of the people, everyone of whose lives were as precious as that of the Prince of Wales. (Cheers.) With regard to the Queen, there was no question as to the discussion of monarchy and republicanism involved in an expression of sympathy with her for the difficulty in which she had been recently placed, and he should be ashamed of the man who would not acknowledge to such a feeling. (Hear.)

THE CONTINENT.

Looking abroad they found the United States enjoying continued prosperity, and doing what the old Governments of Europe were not—paying her debts. (Hear.) Germany had settled itself into a federal empire; but let him say that those who believed Germany was bent on a career of military supremacy and warlike glory were badly taught, and did not know the German people. (Hear.) These had felt too much of the war and the sacrifices it involved, to wish this; Germany was too proud of her philosophers, writers, and poets, to cast herself down to

Bismarcks and Moltkes. (Hear.) The "balance of power," which used to be thought an essential thing for the welfare of the world, had gone. France was learning to trust in herself, rather than to the pulling down of one man and the setting up of another; and was beginning to see, he hoped, that the welfare of a nation did not depend on any one man, but was contained in the deep sense of loyalty and patriotism that spreads through the hearts of a people. (Cheers.)

IRELAND.

He here wished to glance at one matter as to which some would probably differ with him, while nearly every one would agree with him as to the difficulty of treating it. There was a choke in Parliament last session, and everything being pressed on there was a breakdown of the arrangements for facilitating business, and a terrible jumble was the result. (Hear.) A commission sat to find out what was to be done, and it reported that it was desirable to alter the times for meeting, and the mode of doing business, but nothing was done. But in the discussions which took place, there was one thing which could hardly escape notice. When an Irish question came before the House of Commons it was always shelved and got rid of quietly, or else it was laughed and joked out. This occurred with matters of the deepest consequence to Ireland. (Hear.) For his part, after carefully considering all the different aspects of the question, he was inclined to think it would be a good thing for England, if not for Ireland, if they could give to Ireland the right of managing her own domestic affairs. (Loud cheers.) Some years before he told them that it was his opinion that the grievances of Ireland were so deepseated that nothing but repeal would get rid of them. He had come to the conclusion now, after the long interval that had elapsed since, and without being a wiser man now than then, that Ireland was entitled to this. (Cheers.) They dealt with

Irish questions from an English point of view, and consequently made mistakes; they did not understand Ireland because it was proven by the fact that they had not succeeded in repressing dissatisfaction. Peace Preservation Bills, Coercion Bills, and Press Bills had failed, and it would be worth while for the people of England to consider if something could not be done to give the people of Ireland peace by allowing them the management of their own affairs, apart from Imperial concerns. (Hear.) Mr. Gladstone's argument at Glasgow, when he tried to ridicule the question of Home Rule for Ireland, was unfair, and to show this he would give a specimen of it. The Scotch, he said, were an industrious people, and relied much on their native force of character to aid them where in similar circumstances the Irish failed, the fisheries being referred to as proof of this. But look at the difference between the two cases. The Scotch were aided with a grant of £16,000 a year for the encouragement of the fisheries, and it must be remembered Scotland was not so large in coast line as Ireland, and the industry was not so important there as it was to the people of Ireland, but Ireland only obtained £1,000. (Hear, and cries of "shame.") It was required that less centralization should exist, as well as in reference to England as to Ireland. Do what they pleased, Ireland had not been fairly treated, and although the Land and Church Act gave Ireland something, still they were characteristics of trouble that would not be removed unless by Irishmen themselves, who only could understand them. (Hear.) This did not mean separation. Things of imperial interest would still be managed by the limited Parliament. It meant that the union between the two countries should be on such a basis as to enable them to agree on subjects of common interest, and which they don't do now. (Hear.) The proposition was much more reasonable than those made by those who ignorantly object to it, without knowing anything

about it. (Cheers.) There was an interruption here, and Dr. Langley said if the gentleman who caused it would agree to it, he would meet him at any time in that hall to argue the Home Rule question with him. (Cheers.)

THE WORK OF THE FUTURE.

Taking a glance at the future, he said we should be obliged to complete the Reform Act by removing all restrictions and trouble to the voter ; we must have a national, unsectarian, compulsory, and free education. (Cheers.) We must deal with the drink-traffic—(hear, hear)—by regarding the sentiment of the people, leaving them within certain limitations to deal with the question as to whether there shall be a decrease or increase in the number of houses engaged in the traffic in their own localities. (Loud cheers.) The Contagious Diseases Acts would have to be repealed. We must force on the Government to carry out their professions, and have practical economy, and as that would include the dealing properly with the public buildings, the first one they should return to the public service would be Greenwich Hospital. (Cheers.) The franchise should be obtained for women duly qualified to exercise it. The Game Laws would have to be repealed. (Cheers.) So far for things close at hand. Beyond them we must deal with the Land Question ; the land to be regarded as national property, and the State to give full compensation to those giving up its use to the State. (Cheers.) So long as starvation walks the streets, and pauperism increases so long will there be a protest against the principle which allows the withdrawal of the land from cultivation, and impoverishes the people. We must deal with the House of Lords, by turning it into a senate, where men of science and of the classes which do most service to the country may sit, leaving the hereditary aristocracy to win their way to it by intellectual worth alone. (Cheers.) We must reform

the army, a much greater question than the abolition of purchase, the army, than which nothing was so costly to the people, and which was the home of favouritism and jobbery, must be remodelled, and every citizen must, as a duty, take part in the organization for the defence of his country. (Cheers.) Our army cost £15,000,000, and we could not send £25,000 men to Belgium for it, while the Swiss army, costing £333,000 could furnish 40,000 efficient men in a fortnight, when it was necessary to send them to her frontier. (Hear.) Lastly, there was pauperism, that terrible cancer in the society of England and burden to the national conscience, to be got rid of. (Hear.) He had asked a medical friend why it was that in certain large workhouses the paupers died off at five times the rate they should do. His answer was "I have £35 a year, and have to find my own drugs—"("shame")—and the Poor-Law Board endorses that salary. If my patients get well they do so by the mercy of God, and not from any physic of mine." Did not this reveal a horrible state of things?—(hear)—and was it not horrible to think of the daily deaths from want in large and poor districts? If we did not deal with this monstrous system it would deal with us. It was like the Sphinx, which put a problem, and destroyed those who could not solve it. Unless we could solve this problem of pauperism we should be destroyed. He did not speak as an alarmist. But if we did not get rid of this sore, which was eating into the heart of England, it would one day destroy us. (Hear, hear.) What can be done?

THE TORIES.

We interrogate the Tories and they point us back to Feudalism, when poverty was the care of the Church and the many were the bondsmen of the few. But bad as pauperism is—*it is better to be a pauper than a slave.* They point to the ashes of a

dead past, and bid us light the altars of hope with them ; they warn us back from that march of progress to a better future which nature and philosophy have promised to us, and draw inviting pictures of that Egypt where the flesh-pots of mere sensual comfort are to be had under a paternal system, in exchange for the sacrifice of all the possibilities of the grander developments of the highest attributes of man, under the trials and sacrifices of the onward march to a more perfect liberty. We ask for an egg, they give us a serpent ; we ask for bread, and they offer us a stone.

THE WHIGS.

We turn to the Whigs—those timid tinkers of old constitutional forms, for ever engaged in the effort to put “the new wine into old bottles”—a party sitting like an old hen upon the addled eggs of measures under consideration, unconscious of the fire that may shortly burn her basket, and whose only hatchings are borrowed from another’s nest. We appeal to the Whigs for a policy—but policy they have none—except that of Mr. Micawber “waiting for something to turn up.” They initiate nothing and teach nothing—they have forgotten nothing and learned nothing. *What can be DONE?*

THE ARMY OF ADVANCEMENT.

Whence can be brought the etherial fires to vivify these dead carcasses of the political party? Whence can we hope for that breath of earnestness which shall cause a shaking amongst the dry bones, and the arising of the new army of progress? It must come from the people—from the heart and conscience of the people. Each in our sphere should preach that gospel of unselfishness upon which alone true patriotism can grow. We must protest against the worship of wealth, that idolatry of the golden calf so fatal to true progress, and proclaim that the greatness and permanence of a nation is not secured by the material riches of its citizens, but by the intellectual force, the moral virtues, and the patriotism of its people.

What constitutes a State ?

Not high raised battlement and castled mound,
But MEN—high-minded MEN—

Who know their rights, and knowing dare maintain.

Yes, in the social convulsions that impend, society would find its greatest security in a people not merely educated in the elements of knowledge, but capable of giving the weight of their influence to the good and true. As a rule they have always done so hitherto, and I have a firm faith that they will be generally found on the side of justice. But the crisis which impends is not merely that which involves the fate of a Ministry, it is one which goes to the very foundations of society. The problem cannot be solved by appeals to precedent. The time may be nearer than some of us think when the protest of deepening poverty against increasing wealth will have to be met with something more real than quotations from the Board of Trade returns, or the figures of exports and imports. The wail of agonizing destitution may suddenly become the trumpet-blast of destructive and bloody revolution ; when the increasing luxury of wealth will be regarded as a crime in the red eyes of the despondent poor, and when, amid scenes too terrible to contemplate, against which sword and bullet will not avail, the old traditions of Government, the landmarks of hoary privilege, the gilded shams and ermined idols of worthless rank may be torn down and trampled underfoot by men and women who have suffered too much and learned too little. For that crisis it is the duty of the earnest politician to prepare.

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide

In the strife of Truth with Falsehood for the good or evil side.

Some great cause—God's new Messiah—offering each the bloom or blight,

Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right ;

And the choice goes by for ever 'twixt that darkness and the light.

Hast thou chosen, oh, my people ! on whose party
thou wilt stand,
Ere the doom from his worn sandals shakes the dust
against our land ?
Though the cause of Evil prospered, 'tis Truth alone
is strong,
And albeit she wander outcast now—I see around
her throng
'Troops of beautiful tall angels to enshield her from
all wrong.

Careless seems the Great Avenger ; History's pages
but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems
and the Word ;
Truth for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on the
Throne
But that Scaffold sways the future, and behind the
dim unknown
Standeth Justice in the shadow, keeping watch
above his own.

(Loud and long-continued applause.)

Mr. Davis, of Plumstead, moved, and Mr. Lacey, of Deptford, seconded the following resolution, which was carried with enthusiasm :—

“That this meeting tenders its sincere thanks to Dr. Baxter Langley for his able and instructive address on ‘The Political Situation,’ and pledges itself to further as much as possible the political principles he has so clearly and eloquently advocated on the present occasion.”

A vote of thanks to the chairman concluded the proceedings, at the close of which Dr. Langley was again much applauded.